

CHRISTIANITY IN CONFLICT

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AN account of personal experiences may be interesting for one of two reasons: (1) because the writer is in some way remarkable; (2) because, not being at all remarkable, he may be able to set forth in a concrete way the experience of a considerable body of men. It is for the latter reason, if at all, that the present little sketch may justify its place in the volume of which it is to form a part. I have been asked to contribute to the volume, I suppose, in order that I may show by the example of my own very imperfect, but for that reason all the more typical, experience how it is that a considerable number of persons have been led to resist the current of the age and to hold with mind and heart to that religion of supernatural redemption which has always hitherto been known as Christianity.

In the pursuance of this task, however, I shall not seek to distinguish those elements in my experience which are peculiar from those which I share with others, but shall simply set forth certain observations of mine in the concrete, in the hope that here and there they may by way of example shed some light upon something less unimportant than they are in themselves. It seems to me, even with that explanation, to be rather a presumptuous undertaking; but the responsibility is the Editor's, not mine.

If the question be asked how it has come about that contrary to the majority of the men of our day I am a believer in the truth of the Bible and an adherent of the redemptive religion which the Bible presents, the answer

will be found, to a far greater extent than in any other one place, in the home in Baltimore in which, in company with my brothers, Arthur W. Machen, Jr. and Thomas Machen, I was brought up. My father, who died in 1915 at the age of eighty-eight, and my mother, who died in 1931 at the age of eighty-two, were both Christians; from them I learned what Christianity is and how it differs from certain modern substitutes. I also learned that Christian conviction can go hand in hand with a broad outlook upon life and with the pursuit of learning.

My father was a lawyer, whose practice had been one of the best in the State of Maryland. But the success which he attained at the bar did not serve in the slightest to make him narrow in his interests. All his life he was a tremendous reader, and reading to him was never a task. I suppose it never occurred to him to read merely from a sense of duty; he read because he loved to read. He would probably have been greatly amused if anyone had called him a "scholar"; yet his knowledge of Latin and Greek and English and French literature (to say nothing of Italian, which he took up for the fun of it when he was well over eighty and was thus in a period of life which in other men might be regarded as old age) would put our professional scholars to shame.

With his knowledge of literature there went a keen appreciation of beauty in other fields—an appreciation which both my brothers have inherited. One of my father's most marked characteristics was his desire to have contact with the very best. The second-best always left him dissatisfied; and so the editions of the English classics, for example, that found place in his library were always carefully chosen. As I think of them, I am filled with renewed dismay by that provision of the Vestal Copyright Bill, nearly made a law in the last Congress, which would erect a Chinese wall of exclusion around our country and prevent our citizens from having contact with

many things that are finest and most beautiful in the art of the printing and binding of books.

My father's special "hobby" was the study and collection of early editions—particularly fifteenth-century editions of the Greek and Latin classics. Some fine old books were handed down to him from his father's home in Virginia, but others he acquired in the latter part of his long life. His modest means did not suffice, of course, for wholesale acquisitions, but he did try to pick up here and there really good examples of the work of the famous early printers. He was little interested in imperfect copies; everything that he secured was certain to be the very best. I can hardly think of his love of old books as a "hobby"; it was so utterly spontaneous and devoid of self-consciousness. He loved the beautiful form of the old books, as he loved their contents; and the acquisition of every book on his shelves was a true expression of that love.

He was a profoundly Christian man, who had read widely and meditated earnestly upon the really great things of our holy Faith. His Christian experience was not of the emotional or pietistical type, but was a quiet stream whose waters ran deep. He did not adopt that "Touch not, taste not, handle not" attitude toward the good things or the wonders of God's world which too often today causes earnest Christian people to consecrate to God only an impoverished man, but in his case true learning and true piety went hand in hand. Every Sunday morning and Sunday night, and on Wednesday night, he was in his place in Church, and a similar faithfulness characterized all his service as an elder in the Presbyterian Church. At that time the Protestant churches had not yet become political lobbies, and Presbyterian elders were chosen not because they were "outstanding men [or women] in the community," but because they were men of God. I love to think of that old Presbyterian session in the Franklin Street Presbyterian Church of Baltimore.

It is a refreshing memory in these days of ruthless and heartless machinery in the Church. God grant that the memory may some day become actuality again and that the old Christian virtues may be revived!

Even stronger was the influence of my mother. Like my father, she was an exceedingly wide reader; her book on *The Bible in Browning* is only one gleaming from a very rich field. Her most marked intellectual characteristic, perhaps, was the catholicity of her tastes. She loved poetry with a deep and discriminating love, but she loved with equal ardor the wonders and beauties of nature. Long before the days of "Outlines of Science" and "Outlines" of everything else, she was a student of botany and also a student of the stars in their courses. I shall never forget the eager delight with which she used to stand with me, when I was very young, upon a ridge in the White Mountains and watch the long shadows creep upward upon the opposite heights. She loved nature in its more majestic aspects, and she also loved the infinite sweetness of the woods and fields. I suppose it is from her that I learned to escape sometimes from the heartless machinery of the world, and the equally heartless machinery, alas, of a church organization nominally dedicated to Christ, and refresh my soul with the friendliness of the hills. But beneath my mother's love of nature and beneath her love of poetry that was inextricably intertwined with that other love, there lay her profound reverence for the Author of all beauty and all truth. To her God was all and in all, and her access to God she found only through the new and living way that the Scriptures point out. I do not see how anyone could know my mother well without being forever sure that whatever else there may be in Christianity the real heart of Christianity is found in the atoning death of Christ.

I am glad that in my very early youth I visited my grandfather's home in Macon, Georgia, where my mother was brought up. Its fragrance and its spaciousness and

simplicity were typical of a by-gone age, with the passing of which I am convinced that something precious has departed from human life. In both my father and my mother, and their associates whom I saw from time to time, I caught a glimpse of a courtlier, richer life, and a broader culture than that which dominates the metallic age in which we are living now. It is a vision that I can never forget. I cannot, indeed, hope to emulate the breadth of education attained by both my parents and successfully emulated especially by my older brother; my own efforts seem utterly puny when compared with such true and spontaneous learning as that. But at least I am glad I have had the vision. It has taught me at least that there are things in heaven and earth never dreamed of in our mechanistic world. Some day there may be a true revival of learning, to take the place of the narrowness of our age; and with that revival of learning there may come, as in the sixteenth century, a rediscovery of the gospel of Christ.

In Baltimore I attended a good private school. It was purely secular; and in it I learned nothing about the Bible or the great things of our Christian faith. But I did not need to learn about those things in any school; for I learned them from my mother at home. That was the best school of all; and in it, without any merit of my own, I will venture to say that I had acquired a better knowledge of the contents of the Bible at twelve years of age than is possessed by many theological students of the present day. The Shorter Catechism was not omitted. I repeated it perfectly, questions and answers, at a very tender age; and the divine revelation of which it is so glorious a summary was stored up in my mind and heart. When a man has once come into sympathetic contact with that noble tradition of the Reformed Faith, he will never readily be satisfied with a mere "Fundamentalism" that seeks in some hasty modern statement a greatest common measure between men of different creeds. Rather will he

strive always to stand in the great central current of the Church's life that has come down to us through Augustine and Calvin to the standards of the Reformed Faith.

My mother did more for me than impart a knowledge of the Bible and of the Faith of our Church. She also helped me in my doubts. Having passed through intellectual struggle herself, having faced bravely from her youth on the objections to the truth of the Christian religion, she was able to help those who had doubts. And of doubts I certainly had no lack. In this connection, I cannot forbear to speak also of my older brother, Arthur W. Machen, Jr., and of my cousin, LeRoy Gresham, both of whom I greatly admired. A man is in sad case if he must fight the battle of faith and unbelief entirely alone. In most instances, God uses the help and example of older and wiser men and women to bring him safely through.

When I was seventeen years of age, I entered the Johns Hopkins University as an undergraduate student, and in 1901 I received my Bachelor of Arts degree. At that time, the initial impulse of the Johns Hopkins, which had made such a profound impression upon the entire intellectual life of our country, had not yet run its course. Daniel Coit Gilman, the first president, was still in office; and of the famous original faculty, Remsen, Rowland and Gildersleeve still occupied their chairs. Even an undergraduate could appreciate to some extent the stimulus of such an environment; and in my case the stimulus was enormously increased when, in the autumn of 1901, I entered as a graduate student into the Greek seminar (or, as it was better called, the Greek seminary) of Gildersleeve himself.

Gildersleeve may perhaps be regarded as the most notable classical scholar that America has yet produced. In him was found a rare combination of accurate philological learning with something akin, at least, to literary genius. I shall never forget the hours that I spent with the little

company of students that gathered around the table in his seminary room. There were no undergraduates in that company and no candidates for the Master of Arts degree. They were all men who intended to make the teaching of language their life work and who had altogether transcended the school-boy or undergraduate point of view. Never was there an environment where earnest study was had in more honor than in that group of students of Latin and Greek under Gildersleeve and C. W. E. Miller and Kirby Smith. In such a company Gildersleeve would let himself go. With a magisterial disregard of anything like system, he started with Greek syntax and then allowed his thought to range over the literature of the world. His successor, C. W. E. Miller, has preserved much of the work of the great teacher in the splendidly edited volume, *Selections from the Brief Mention of Basil Lanneau Gildersleeve*; but particularly fortunate were we who actually sat in the seats of the learners in that class-room.

I shall always be glad that I obtained contact with the rigidly scientific method and with the contempt for mere clap-trap which characterized the Johns Hopkins University in its best days. But as my first year of graduate study drew to its close the thought did occur to me (more or less vaguely, perhaps, at the time) that that method might be applied with even greater advantage to a subject-matter different from that which engaged our attention there. The year 1901-1902 was the Plato year in the cycle that governed the choice of studies in Gildersleeve's seminary; and in addition to our wider reading we were each assigned brief passages from Plato's dialogues for detailed discussion. It was a useful exercise. But I could not help reflecting that there are certain other ancient Greek books whose detailed interpretation is of profound interest not merely to scholars or philosophers but to the rank and file of mankind. Could I aspire to devote my life to that far more important field?

I was still undecided when the academic year came to

an end, and during part of the summer continued my Greek studies at the University of Chicago. I took only one course. It was a course in Pindar under Paul Shorey, and it brought plenty of hard work as well as contact with another true man of letters in a philological chair. A student who can count both Gildersleeve and Shorey among his teachers—even for brief periods of time—is fortunate indeed.

But when the summer was over, I turned at last to the field upon which I had for some time been casting longing eyes. How much more worth while it is, if one is to apply modern scientific methods of research to ancient books, to apply them to those books whose every word is of an importance to humanity with which the importance even of Homer and Plato can never for one moment be compared!

So I entered Princeton Theological Seminary in the autumn of 1902. In doing so, I was encouraged particularly by Francis L. Patton, who was just coming to the presidency of the seminary. He had been a guest repeatedly at my father's home in Baltimore. I admired him then greatly, and I came afterwards to love him with all my heart. With infinite patience he brought me through my doubts and helped me in my difficulties. Never did a doubter and a struggler have a better friend than I had in this wonderfully eloquent and brilliant man.

From the start, when I went to Princeton, I was impressed by William P. Armstrong, the head of the New Testament department, who later became my most intimate friend. I had been in contact, at the Johns Hopkins University, with modern scientific method applied to the study of ancient books. That same method was applied by Armstrong to the New Testament. No student in his classroom who knew anything whatever of modern methods of philological and historical research could help seeing that he was a modern university man of the very highest type.

It seemed significant to me then, as it seems today, that, applying such modern methods of criticism to the New Testament, he could arrive at a result confirmatory, and not destructive, of the trustworthiness of the New Testament books.

One of Armstrong's strongest points is that he combines detailed knowledge of critical and historical questions with an understanding of great underlying principles. His wide reading in philosophy enables him to show the connection between schools of New Testament criticism and various schools of modern philosophy; but, above all, he is able to exhibit the connection between the supernaturalistic view of the New Testament and the theistic view of God and the world upon which the Christian religion depends. I think that this union between detailed scholarship and an understanding of great principles was characteristic of the old Princeton Seminary.¹ Princeton differed from other seats of conservative scholarship in that more clearly than was done elsewhere it found the centre of the curriculum in the department of systematic theology. For my part, I have always regarded the study of the New Testament, to which I have given my life, as ancillary to that other department. New Testament study has its own methods, indeed; but ultimately its aim should be to aid in the establishment of that system of doctrine that the Scriptures contain.

At Princeton the chair of systematic theology was occupied by a man who effected a personal, as well as a logical, union between that department and the departments devoted to Biblical research. B. B. Warfield had won his reputation as a New Testament scholar. In the field of textual criticism he had been among the first to recognize the epoch-making importance of the labors of

¹ Dr. Armstrong has remained, indeed, at the new Princeton Seminary, after the recent reorganization, but he certainly belongs spiritually to the old, and it is extremely unlikely that scholars of his type will be added to the faculty of the institution henceforth.

Westcott and Hort, and he had supplemented those labors by independent research. In New Testament exegesis his contributions were highly valued in Great Britain as well as in America. Then, with his coming to Princeton, he turned to the field of systematic theology, bringing to that field the broad exegetical and critical foundation without which the systematic theologian is hampered at every turn. Warfield became one of the greatest authorities in the history of doctrine; and it may certainly be said, in general, that he had a truly encyclopædic mind.

When I was a student at Princeton I admired Warfield, as we all did; but I was far from understanding fully his greatness both as a scholar and as a thinker. I was still playing with the notion that a minimizing apologetic may serve the needs of the Church, and that we may perhaps fall back upon a Biblical Christianity which relinquishes the real or supposed rigidities of the Reformed system. Subsequent investigation and meditation have shown me, as over against such youthful folly, that Warfield was entirely right; I have come to see with greater and greater clearness that consistent Christianity is the easiest Christianity to defend, and that consistent Christianity—the only thoroughly Biblical Christianity—is found in the Reformed Faith.

In general, I need only to think of my own immaturity when I was a student at Princeton in order to be convinced that theological students are far from being so well qualified in the field of theological encyclopædia as they sometimes think they are. An educational institution, I am convinced, should present its curriculum with a certain clear-cut, though sympathetic, decisiveness. If it is governed by its students or its alumni or the donors of its funds, it might just as well close its doors.

There is not space for me to speak of the rest of the old Princeton Seminary faculty. From every one of them I obtained something distinctive and something of real value. I also profited very greatly by the courses in the

history of modern philosophy which I pursued at Princeton University under A. T. Ormond. How Ralph Barton Perry can speak of Ormond as "ponderous, high-minded, and unintelligible"² is a complete mystery to me, unless the explanation is found in the fact that this writer refers to his studies at Princeton as belonging to his "prenatal" experience in philosophy. As a matter of fact, anything more utterly limpid and more broadly illuminating than Ormond's lectures it would be difficult to conceive.

On my graduation from Princeton Seminary in the spring of 1905, I went to Germany, having also spent the previous summer there. In Germany I obtained practically no contact with conservative scholarship, but listened almost exclusively to those who represented the dominant naturalistic point of view.

During the winter semester 1905-1906, I was a student at Marburg. Since I was intending to be a teacher of the New Testament, I confined myself for the most part to New Testament courses. But I did hear the lectures on systematic theology by W. Herrmann, and I have always rejoiced greatly that I had that privilege. In one's contact with any great movement, it has always seemed to me important to attend to its best, and not merely to its worst, representatives; and Herrmann certainly represented Ritschlianism at its best. He was a man, moreover, who could never fully be understood or appreciated through his books alone. Only personal contact could reveal the contagious earnestness, the deep religious feeling, of the man. I felt, as I sat in that class-room, that it was the centre of world-wide influence, a place from which a great current went forth, for good or ill, into the whole life of mankind.

That current has now run its course. Certainly the power of Ritschlianism is diminishing. Its popular phrases, used often by men who know little of their

² Ralph Barton Perry, in *Contemporary American Philosophy*, 1930, ii, p. 187.

origin, are still heard in the pulpits of America; but in those circles whence come the real springs of influence the Ritschlian solution of our religious difficulties has already had its day. I was not insensible of the attractiveness of that solution when I sat in Herrmann's class-room, and I am not insensible of it now. How happy we might seem to be if we could only avoid the debate about the existence of a personal God—if we could only relegate all that to a sphere of metaphysics with which the Christian man need have nothing to do! What a world of trouble it would save us if we could only make ourselves independent of the findings of detailed historical research and find in the Gospel picture of the moral life of Jesus all that we need to give us the value of God! But in reality this solution has proved to be utterly fallacious. It is fallacious for at least two reasons.

In the first place, the religious experience that it seeks to conserve is not really independent of apologetic debate. The picture of "the Liberal Jesus," which called forth Herrmann's unbounded reverence—the picture which Harnack presented in *What is Christianity?* and which was set forth in many other learned and popular books—has by no means escaped criticism. Radicals have denied its historicity; "consistent eschatologists" have pointed out in the sources elements which contradict it at its root. The picture is faulty, moreover, in itself. The Ritschlians thought that the moral life of Jesus—their Jesus, reconstructed by their particular type of naturalistic criticism of the Gospels—was capable of calling forth mankind's unbounded reverence, was capable of having for all mankind the value of God. But, alas, that is far from being the case. The "Liberal" or Ritschlian Jesus has in His Messianic consciousness a moral contradiction at the very centre of His being; such a Jesus is very far indeed from being a perfect moral ideal, to say nothing of being worthy to assume the place in human affection and rever-

ence that used to be assumed by the Creator of heaven and earth.

A second reason why the Ritschlian solution of our apologetic difficulties has failed is that the type of religious experience which it endeavors to conserve is hardly true Christian experience at all. W. Herrmann was a deeply religious man; no one who came into contact with him can doubt that. But was the religion of which he was so noble an adherent really the Christian religion? That may well be doubted. If Herrmann was a Christian, he was a Christian not because of but despite those things that were most distinctive of his teaching. At the heart of Christianity is a view of sin whose profundities were a sealed book to Herrmann and to all of his school. A man under true conviction of sin will never be satisfied with the Ritschlian Jesus, but will seek his way into the presence of that Jesus who redeemed us by His precious blood and is ever living to make intercession for us at the throne of God.

In the New Testament field, I heard at Marburg lectures by no less than four men. Easily foremost in my estimation at that time was A. Jülicher, then at the very height of his powers. I shall never forget my first hour in his class-room. Even comparatively trivial things stand out in my mind as I think of the thrill of that hour. I remember, for example, that in speaking of commentaries on Galatians he said of Lightfoot's commentary that it was "a masterpiece of learned work" (*ein Meisterstück gelehrter Arbeit*). What a homelike feeling it gave me to hear our revered Lightfoot praised by a leader in such an opposite school of thought!

In general, I have found from that day to this that the really able men do not by any means share the contemptuous attitude toward conservative scholars which seems to be regarded as a mark of learning in certain circles in America. That may serve to give comfort to us believers in the truth of the Bible. On the other hand, I

have never been able to give myself the comfort which some devout believers seem to derive from a contemptuous attitude toward the men on the other side of the great debate; I have never been able to dismiss the "higher critics" *en masse* with a few words of summary condemnation. Much deeper, it seems to me, lies the real refutation of this mighty attack upon the truth of our religion; and we are not really doing our cause service by underestimating the power of the adversaries in the debate.

When I was at Marburg, J. Weiss seemed to me to be somewhat overshadowed by Jülicher. He was a very delightful man, who showed his kindness by inviting me to his house and by befriending me in every way. Also he was a clear and popular lecturer. But I thought of him rather as a popularizer than as a profound scholar. I have since then come to see that this impression was totally incorrect. His *Urchristentum* and above all his amazingly rich and learned commentary on I Corinthians have made me repent of my youthful injustice to one of the ablest of modern New Testament scholars.

Rudolf Knopf, who later went to the Protestant faculty at Vienna, lectured when I was at Marburg on "New Testament Introduction." It was a clear and methodical course of lectures, in which the entire field of special introduction was covered. As I compared it with the treatment of the same subject by Armstrong at Princeton, I observed to my delight that the old Princeton had placed the real questions before me in a thoroughly fair and comprehensive way. The conclusions arrived at in the two cases were very different, but at least my Princeton teacher had not concealed from me either the position of the opponents or the evidence upon which their contentions were based. Many criticisms have been brought against the old Princeton Seminary; but whoever brings against it the charge that it substituted passionate dogmatism for fair and scholarly treatment of the opposing

views can be set down as either violently prejudiced or completely ignorant about that of which he is venturing to speak.

At Marburg, I listened also to lectures on the Gospel of John by Walter Bauer, then a young *Privat-dozent*, now the distinguished successor of Schürer and Harnack in the editorship of the *Theologische Literaturzeitung*. The course, which came at eight o'clock on the dark winter mornings, was attended by four students—two Germans, one Englishman, and myself. On a number of occasions the two Germans were absent; and once, I remember, the Englishman was absent too, so that the lecture was delivered (with all the academic formality characteristic of a German lecture-room) for my sole benefit. On another occasion, I confess that the regularity of my attendance was impaired. That was on the morning after a hastily organized *Nachtbummel* which took me with a crowd of my German fellow-students on an expedition through the surrounding country that lasted from midnight until seven o'clock.

One thing that surprised me in Germany was the amount of intellectual labor that can be accomplished by a German student with a minimum of sleep. The secret no doubt is that German students have learned to work at the *Gymnasium* before the joyous university semesters are begun. Our American students for the most part have never learned to work; and what little acquaintance with intellectual application the students of twenty-five years ago may have attained is today being destroyed partly by a ruthless standardization, which is standardization down and not standardization up, and partly by the untrammelled operation of our great American pedagogic discovery that it is possible to think with a completely empty mind. Solid subjects have almost been removed from American schools, and a really distressing intellectual decadence is the not unnatural result.

At Göttingen, during the summer semester of 1906, I

heard Schürer, Bousset, Heitmüller and (in another department) Kattenbusch. Schürer had the reputation in some quarters of being tiresome; but I did not find him so at all. The careful, methodical character of his mind was well expressed in his lectures, and one came away from them impressed with the kind of mental process necessary for massive learning such as that which is displayed in "The History of the Jewish People." Heitmüller had promise of brilliant achievement; but for some reason his published contributions afterwards were less extensive than might at that time have been expected. His death was untimely, like the death of J. Weiss, Knopf and Bousset. Bousset's lectures were brilliant, as might have been expected from an examination of his published work. I can see him now as he chopped off some sharp, incisive utterance, and looked around with his great round eyes while the effect would sink into the mind of the class. His official position was only that of an *extraordinarius*, but already he was one of the really commanding figures in the theological world.

My admiration for Bousset's learning and brilliancy were later increased by his book, *Kyrios Christos*, which appeared in 1913. Not since the time of F. C. Baur, it seems to me, has there appeared such an original, comprehensive and grandly conceived re-writing of early Christian history. The construction is mistaken—of that I am firmly convinced and tried to give some expression to my conviction in *The Origin of Paul's Religion*—but it is mistaken in a grand and incisive way. It is such books which at least present, even though they do not solve, the really central problems.

A comparison of Bousset on the one hand with Norden and Reitzenstein on the other will show the difference between mere theologians in Germany and the occupants of philological chairs. The difference is not found in any agreement on the part of the theologians with the Bible or the Christian Faith, nor is it found in any inferiority

of their scholarship. But it is found in the fact that whereas the philologists seem to regard it as the mark of a true scholar to be obscure, the theologians are not ashamed to be clear. Certainly nothing could exceed the clarity of Bousset's *Kyrios Christos*. It is an immensely learned book: but the facts that it adduces are marshalled like a well-disciplined army; the reader is never in any doubt as to what every fact, whether mistakenly or not, is intended to prove.

The type of thing that Bousset represented and that Jülicher represents is to a certain extent out of date in Germany at the present time. Owing partly to the Barthian depreciation of historical studies in the Biblical field, and partly, I am obliged to think, to the bankruptcy of the naturalistic reconstruction of the beginnings of Christianity, New Testament studies occupy by no means the place in the intellectual life of the country that they occupied twenty-five years ago. But the pendulum will swing back. The interest of the human race in those amazing historical documents that form the New Testament will never permanently be lost.

The way in which I was received in Germany by both students and professors aroused in me a gratitude which it is needless to say the war has done nothing to destroy. I had in many respects a happy time when I was there in 1905-1906. In other respects, it was a time of struggle and of agony of soul. I was living in an environment where the Christian religion as I knew and loved it had long been abandoned. No Christian man could live in such an environment without facing questions of a very serious kind.

It was not Germany, however, that first brought doubts into my soul; for I had been facing them for years before my German student days. Obviously it is impossible to hold on with the heart to something that one has rejected with the head, and all the usefulness of Christianity can never lead us to be Christians unless the Christian reli-

gion is true. But is it true or is it not? That is a serious question indeed.

I may perhaps be subserving the purpose of this series of sketches if at this point I mention certain considerations that were useful to me as I passed through the long and bitter experience that the raising of this question brought into my life.

One consideration was presented in particularly clear-cut fashion by an illustration which Francis L. Patton used to employ in one of his lectures or sermons, which I heard in my college days. I do not think it ever found a place in any of his published work, and I cannot remember the details of it with anything approaching accuracy. But he likened the man who faces the problem of living to a man who stands on the waterfront looking over the ships that might take him across the sea. *He is obliged to go*, and the only question is in which ship his voyage shall be made. Two ships lie at the dock. One of them, he is told, is new and well found, has a careful captain and is rated A-1 at Lloyd's. He is favorably impressed, but being a cautious man turns by way of comparison to the other. That, he is told, is old and rotten, has a drunken captain and is ready to be condemned. Will he then choose the former ship? "No," he says, "despite the evidence for the goodness of that ship, I cannot be *certain* of its goodness, and so I must choose the second ship after all!"

Such, said Patton in effect, is *our* conduct if we refuse to act on reasonable probability in this matter of religion. We have no choice about undertaking this business of living—and of dying. We cannot choose but make the voyage. The only question is in which ship we shall go. One ship presents itself with evidences of safety far superior to those of all others. It is the ship of Christianity, the way of living and dying founded upon the supernatural revelation that the Bible contains. Shall we desert that ship for one far less approved, simply because the

evidence in its favor does not amount to apodictic certitude? Or, acting on the best evidence that we can obtain, shall we make the great venture of faith and launch forth into the deep at Christ's command?

Bishop Blougram, too, was a great help to me as Patton used to quote him in the pulpit and in the home; and that comfort was to be had no matter what sort of character Browning meant Bishop Blougram to be. The question is not merely whether we can rest in our faith, but whether we can rest in the doubt that is the necessary alternative of faith. We pass sometimes through periods of very low spiritual vitality. The wonderful gospel which formerly seemed to be so glorious comes to seem almost like an idle tale. Hosts of objections arise in our minds; the whole unseen world recedes in the dim distance, and we think for the moment that we have relinquished the Christian hope. But then let us just face this situation; let us just imagine that we had really given up all these things that formerly seemed to us so dear. Ah, when we do that, life seems to us to be a hopeless blank. It is all very well to toy with the thought of a Christless world, but when we once imagine ourselves living in it we see that really, in our heart of hearts and mind of minds, we have not given up our Saviour after all.

Another thing used to be said to me by my mother in those dark hours when the lamp burned dim, when I thought that faith was gone and shipwreck had been made of my soul. "Christ," she used to say, "keeps firmer hold on us than we keep on Him."

That means, at least, when translated into worldly terms, that we ought to distrust our moods. Many a man has fallen into despair because, losing the heavenly vision for the moment, passing through the dull lowlands of life, he takes such experience as though it were permanent, and deserts a well-grounded conviction which was the real foundation of his life. Faith is often diversified by doubt,

but a man should not desert the conviction of his better moments because the dark moments come.

But my mother's word meant something far deeper than all that. It meant rather that salvation by faith does not mean that we are saved because we keep ourselves at every moment in an ideally perfect attitude of confidence in Christ. No, we are saved because, having once been united to Christ by faith, we are His for ever. Calvinism is a very comforting doctrine indeed. Without its comfort, I think I should have perished long ago in the castle of Giant Despair.

When I returned from Germany in 1906, I entered, as instructor in the New Testament department, into the teaching staff of Princeton Theological Seminary. Except for an interval in France and Belgium from January 1918 to March 1919, I was at Princeton (first as instructor and then as Assistant Professor of New Testament Literature and Exegesis) from 1906 until the reorganization of the seminary in 1929.

During the first part of this period, life in the faculty of the seminary was of a most delightful kind. Francis L. Patton was president, and in him the finest traditions of the institution were preserved. Warfield was Professor of Systematic Theology (or "Professor of Didactic and Polemic Theology," as the chair was then more sonorously and vigorously called). And what a wonderful man he was! His learning was prodigious. No adequate notion of its breadth can be obtained even from his voluminous collected works. Consult him on the most out-of-the-way subjects, and you would find him with the "literature" of each subject at his tongue's end and able to give you just the guidance of which you had need. Now and then, in wonderfully generous fashion, he would go out of his way to give a word of encouragement to a younger man. The old Princeton was an environment in which a man felt encouraged to do his very best.

My best was none too good, but it was done at least

with my whole heart. At the beginning of my Senior year as a student, I remember a piece of advice which was given me by Kerr Duncan Macmillan, then Instructor in Semitic Philology, who later left the seminary and entered, as President of Wells College, into an entirely different field. I mentioned to him the question that was being debated in my mind as to whether during my Senior year I should find time for general reading or compete for the New Testament fellowship. He advised me to do the latter. I could do general reading, he told me, at any time in my life, but the opportunity to do that piece of detailed research would come then and then only. Excellent advice it was. Many a student might be saved from a desultory life if he could receive and act upon advice like that. I acted upon it, to the very best of my ability, by writing a thesis on "The New Testament Account of the Birth of Jesus," and I have always been grateful to the one from whom the advice came.

My schedule as a teacher at Princeton was rather a heavy one, and I do not regret the fact. There were some advanced courses to keep me alive, and I also had the job of teaching elementary Greek. This latter was never mere drudgery to me, as it is to some men. I have notions about it different from those that often prevail, and after fifteen years' experience I embodied them in my little textbook, *New Testament Greek for Beginners*. A teacher of language, it seems to me, or the writer of an elementary textbook, should never yield to the temptation of displaying his philological learning—I myself was greatly helped in my resistance to this temptation by having so little philological learning to display—but should ruthlessly sacrifice everything else to the impartation of a reading knowledge of the language. Philological discussion is very interesting and very important, but it should come later. It is not learning, but often mere pedantry, to discuss the detailed history of a language that one cannot read. The more general observance of that principle

might have delayed, even if it could not have prevented, the sad disfavor into which the classics have fallen in our day.

In 1921, I had the honor of delivering the James Sprunt Lectures at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia. The resulting book, *The Origin of Paul's Religion*, 1921, in which the lectures appeared in greatly enlarged form, deals really with the problem of the origin of the Christian religion. It cannot be doubted but that what is commonly known as "historic Christianity"—the Christianity of the main body of the Church—is found in essentials in the Epistles of Paul; whose genuineness is not denied by serious historians, whether they are Christians or not. Paul thought that his religion was based upon Jesus of Nazareth, one of his contemporaries, who had recently died a shameful death. If Paul was wrong in that, how did the religion of Paul actually arise? I attempted to pass in review the various generically different hypotheses which in modern times have been advanced to answer that question; and in doing so I endeavored to exhibit the inadequacy of all naturalistic hypotheses and present reasons to show, instead, that Paul's view of the origin of his religion is correct. In particular, I tried to show (1) that the "Liberal" or Ritschlian historians were right over against Wrede and other radicals in insisting that Paul possessed and cherished a knowledge of the real Jesus, but (2) that the radicals were right over against the "Liberals" in insisting that the Jesus whom Paul's religion presupposes is no mere teacher of righteousness but a supernatural Redeemer come into the world for the salvation of men. The true synthesis, I argued, is found only when that supernatural Redeemer, presupposed in the Epistles of Paul and presented in detail in the Gospels, is held to be the real Jesus who walked upon this earth.

In my little book, *Christianity and Liberalism*, 1923, I tried to show that the issue in the Church of the present

day is not between two varieties of the same religion, but, at bottom, between two essentially different types of thought and life. There is much interlocking of the branches, but the two tendencies, Modernism and supernaturalism, or (otherwise designated) non-doctrinal religion and historic Christianity, spring from different roots. In particular, I tried to show that Christianity is not a "life" as distinguished from a doctrine, and not a life that has doctrine as its changing symbolic expression, but that—exactly the other way around—it is a life founded on a doctrine.

In *What Is Faith?*, 1925, I tried to combat the anti-intellectualism of the Modernist church—the false separation which is set up between faith and knowledge—and to present the New Testament teaching as to what faith is. That endeavor involved necessarily some treatment of the object of faith, so that the little book contains a brief and summary treatment of considerable portions of Christian doctrine.

In *The Virgin Birth of Christ*, 1930, a book which contains in enlarged form the Thomas Smyth Lectures which I had the honor of delivering at Columbia Theological Seminary, I have tried to present the subject indicated by the title in a somewhat comprehensive way. Whether it is a good book is a question which I shall not presume to answer, but no one can deny that it is a big one!

At present I am engaged in a series of expository studies for the monthly journal, *Christianity Today*, which is the organ of the evangelical party in the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., and is devoted to the propagation and defence of the Reformed Faith throughout the world. I can scarcely imagine a greater privilege than to serve in such an enterprise. The journal is in many respects unique among church papers. It is not at all technical, and is intended for laymen as well as for ministers. But it seeks to avoid the superficiality of the average church paper,

and addresses itself, under the able editorship of Samuel G. Craig, assisted by H. McAllister Griffiths, to thinking men and women who believe that knowledge and piety should go hand in hand.

The period of twenty-seven years during which, with two short intervals, I was connected, first as student and then as teacher, with Princeton Theological Seminary, witnessed the conflict between the old Princeton and the newer forces now dominant in the Presbyterian Church; and finally it witnessed the triumph of the latter in the reorganization of the seminary in 1929.

The old Princeton Seminary may have been good or it may have been bad—opinions differ about that—but at least it was distinctive and at least it was a power in the affairs of men. It was known throughout the world as the chief stronghold of a really learned and really thoroughgoing "Calvinism" in the English-speaking peoples. Even its opponents, if they were scholars, spoke of it with respect.

The old Princeton Seminary first resisted, then succumbed to, the drift of the times. It did not succumb of its own free will; for the majority of its governing board as well as the majority of its faculty desired to maintain the old policy; but that board was removed by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in 1929 and another board was placed in control. Thus the future conformity of Princeton Seminary to the general drift of the times was insured.

This view of the matter has been strenuously opposed by many of those responsible for the change; but how any other view can possibly be taken by any real observer it has always been beyond my power to comprehend.

When the reorganization of Princeton Seminary took place, some men felt that so fine a scholarly tradition as that of the old Princeton ought not to be allowed to perish from the earth. Obviously it could not successfully be

continued at Princeton, under the new and unsympathetic board, but elsewhere it might be carried on.

It is being carried on at the new Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, which was founded in 1929, largely through the initiative of self-sacrificing laymen, "to carry on and perpetuate the policies and traditions of Princeton Theological Seminary, as it existed prior to the reorganization thereof in 1929, in respect to scholarship and militant defense of the Reformed Faith."

The new seminary is vigorously opposed to the intellectual decadence which is so widely manifested in our day. It sets its face like a flint, for example, against the indolent notion that scholarly preparation for the ministry can be carried on without a knowledge of the original languages of the Bible. It is opposed to short cuts and easy lines of least resistance. It is in favor of earnest work, and its students as well as its faculty share that attitude. In particular, it believes that the Christian religion flourishes not in the darkness but in the light.

My whole heart is in this institution and in the cause that it represents. I believe that that cause involves not reaction, but true progress; and I rejoice in my comradeship with the hopeful group of men who constitute its faculty. Particularly do I rejoice in my comradeship with the students. Technically I stand to them in the relation of teacher to scholar; but in reality I often receive from them more than I can give. They have taught me by their brave devotion to principle, by their willingness to sacrifice all for the sake of Christ, that the old gospel is an ever new and living thing. The true hope of the Church rests in such men as these. Meanwhile, as I meet with them in prayer and labor, I feel anew what a blessing Christian fellowship is in the midst of a hostile world.

We who are reckoned as "conservatives" in theology are seriously misrepresented if we are regarded as men who are holding desperately to something that is old merely because it is old and are inhospitable to new

truths. On the contrary, we welcome new discoveries with all our heart; and we are looking, in the Church, not merely for a continuation of conditions that now exist but for a burst of new power. My hope of that new power is greatly quickened by contact with the students of Westminster Seminary. There, it seems to me, we have an atmosphere that is truly electric. It would not be surprising if some of these men might become the instruments, by God's grace, of lifting preaching out of the sad rut into which it has fallen, and of making it powerful again for the salvation of men.

There are certain root convictions which I hold in common with Westminster Seminary and with the journal *Christianity Today*—in common with these representatives of the ancient yet living tradition of the old Princeton. I hold (1) that the Christian religion, as it is set forth on the basis of Holy Scripture in the Standards of the Reformed Faith, is true, and (2) that the Christian religion as so set forth requires and is capable of scholarly defence.

The former of these two convictions makes me dislike the term "Fundamentalism." If, indeed, I am asked whether I am a Fundamentalist or a Modernist, I do not say, "Neither." I do not quibble. In that disjunction, as the inquirer means it, I have very definitely taken sides. But I do not apply the term "Fundamentalist" to myself. I stand, indeed, in the very warmest Christian fellowship with those who do designate themselves by that term. But, for my part, I cannot see why the Christian religion, which has had a rather long and honorable history, should suddenly become an "-ism" and be called by a strange new name.

The second of the two convictions just formulated—that the Christian religion requires and is capable of scholarly defence—does not mean that a man ever was made a Christian merely by argument. There must also be the mysterious work of the Spirit of God in the new birth.

But because argument is insufficient it does not follow that it is unnecessary. From the very beginning, true Christianity has always been presented as a thoroughly reasonable thing. Men sometimes tell us, indeed, that we ought not to be everlastingly *defending* Christianity, but rather ought simply to go forth to *propagate* Christianity. But when men talk thus about propagating Christianity without defending it, the thing that they are propagating is pretty sure not to be Christianity at all. Real Christianity is no mere form of mysticism, but is founded squarely upon a body of truth.

The presentation of that body of truth necessarily involves controversy with opposing views. People sometimes tell us that they are tired of controversy in the Church. "Let us cease this tiresome controversy," they say, "and ask God, instead, for a great revival." Well, one thing is clear about revivals—a revival that does not stir up controversy is sure to be a sham revival, not a real one. That has been clear ever since our Lord said that He had come not to bring peace upon the earth but a sword. A man who is really on fire with a message never thinks of decrying controversy but speaks the truth that God has given him to speak without thought of the favor of men.

In all controversy, however, the great principle of liberty should be preserved. I am old-fashioned in my belief that the Bible is true, but I am equally old-fashioned in my love of freedom. I am opposed to the attack on freedom in whatever form it may come. I am opposed to the Soviets, and I am opposed to Mussolini. For the same reason also, I am opposed to the rapidly growing bureaucracy in this country. I am opposed to a Federal department of education; I am opposed to monopolistic public schools; I am opposed to a standardization that treats human beings as though they were Ford cars.

For the same reason, to say nothing of far deeper reasons, I am opposed to a church union which is the

deadliest enemy of Christian unity. I am opposed with all my mind and heart to the depressing dream of a monopolistic Protestant church organization placing the whole Protestant world under one set of tyrannical committees and boards. I am opposed to the growing discouragement of free discussion in my own church and other churches. I am opposed to secret church courts or judicial commissions. In all ecclesiastical affairs I believe in open covenants openly arrived at. I am opposed with all my might to actions like the action of the last Presbyterian General Assembly tending to discourage publicity regarding measures proposed for adoption by the church.

Just because I believe in liberty, I believe in the right of purely voluntary association. I believe in the right of a voluntary association like the Presbyterian Church. If a man does not believe that the Bible is true, and in his interpretation of the Bible is not an adherent of the Reformed Faith, I am opposed to exerting any compulsion on him to become a Presbyterian minister. If he adopts some position other than that of the Presbyterian Church, let him have full liberty to become a minister in some other body. But if he does choose to become a Presbyterian minister, I hold that he should be able honestly, and without mental reservation, to subscribe to the ordination pledge setting forth that for which the Presbyterian Church exists. Without such honesty there can be no possibility of Christian fellowship anywhere for those who do with their whole heart hold to what that pledge sets forth. And true Christian fellowship, not forced organizational union of those who disagree in the whole direction of their thought and life, is the real need of the hour.

I take a grave view of the present state of the Church; I think that those who cry, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace," constitute the greatest menace to the people of God. I am in little agreement with those who say, for

example, that the Presbyterian Church, to which I belong, is "fundamentally sound." For my part, I have two convictions regarding the Presbyterian Church. I hold (1) that it is not fundamentally sound but fundamentally unsound; and I hold (2) that the Holy Spirit is able to make it sound. And I think we ought, very humbly, to ask Him to do that. Nothing kills true prayer like a shallow optimism. Those who form the consistently Christian remnant in the Presbyterian Church and in other churches, instead of taking refuge in a cowardly anti-intellectualism, instead of decrying controversy, ought to be on their knees asking God to bring the visible Church back from her wanderings to her true Lord.

We can, if we are Christians, still be confident and joyous in these sad days. This is not the first time of unbelief in the history of the Church. There have been other times equally or almost equally dark, yet God has brought His people through. Even in our day, there are far more than seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to the gods of the hour. But our real confidence rests not in the signs of the times, but in the great and precious promises of God. Contrast the glories of God's Word with the weak and beggarly elements of this mechanistic age, contrast the liberty of the sons of God with the ever-increasing slavery into which mankind is falling in our time, and I think we shall come to see with a new clearness, despite the opposition of the world, that we have no reason to be ashamed of the gospel of Christ.

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